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FACTS CONCERNING THE LIFE OF JUDGE JOHN GRAY, 93 YEARS OF AGE, WHO CAME TO SILVERTON, COLORADO IN 1883.

Many people grow old at sixty years, some grow old at eighty, but few of us live to see the ripe age of ninety-three, and, if we do, we seldom retain our faculties the way Judge Gray has. He is seen on the streets almost daily. His mind is keen and he keeps up with the news of the times. He has seen several generations come and go, and he is still with us.

John Gray was born March 13, 1841, in White Creek, New York. In the Judge's own words he "was born in the light of the moon and a tallow candle at White Creek, N.Y., famous for its street shade of sugar maples. My first recollection is of wormfuge and castor oil--a noisy open air political meeting, during the presidential election of 1844 is a distinct memory; also news of Taylor's victory at Buena Vista, borne by carrier pigeons, and published in the New York Herald. When five years of age, with my father and mother, I remember seeing Henry Clay, P.T.Barnum and Tom Thumb on the New York and Erie Canal; Clay's imperial brow, and striking face of intellectual brilliance, yet generous and kind, was indelibly traced upon my memory as I sat upon his knee.

"After a course in the common District School, where the important curriculum was a daily cordial with a stick in it, popular in that period as a discipline to mental activity and manly endurance, and three years in an academy, I entered law school at Poughkeepsie, N.Y., graduating in 1859.

"Attracted to Kansas by the great debate between Lincoln and Douglas, and the rosy reports of undulating plains, waiting to be turned into fields of golden stores, and the thought of starting in life upon the ground floor, unhampered by the deference required to slow promotion in the old settled communities, I bid adieu to the ties of home for experiences new and yet to learn. St. Joseph, Missouri, was the terminus of railroad communication with Kansas. Arriving over the Illinois Central at the Mississippi River,

where passengers were conveyed by ferry to connect with the Hannibal and St. Joe railroad, the ferry boat could not cross because of the floating ice; but joining two young dare-devils, we got sticks and jumped from one cake to another, making the trip about two hours before the boat crossed. The wealth of Croesus would not tempt me to another such fool exploit.

"At St.Joe, I was told that Troy, county seat of Doniphan County, was a good place for a young sprig. It was 15 miles, over a dusty road, on a melting hot day, that on foot, I made the trip. About half way a man in a buggy, driving a fine roadster passed, looking neither to right or left. I said then that I would never pass a traveler in a conveyance and not take him in, and I never have.

"There were twenty lawyers in Troy. The land office was located there--about as many saloons, the court and bar being the principal patrons. Not pleased with the outlook, I started another fifteen miles on foot to Atchison.

"About half way, stopping at a house for a drink,I fortunately met a man to whom I afterwards became a strong friend--Col. A.G.Ege. He had two horses saddked and his son conducted me to Atchison, where I sought the office of Otis and Glick--the latter now known as one of the governors of Kansas, and whose statue is in the art gallery of the U.S. Capitol building. They were the leading firm in Northern Kansas."

This firm gave Judge Gray the privilege of reading in their office and batching quarters upstairs, in return for the janitor work. After about a month in the office, the Attorneys decided that Gray might be worth something to them and they gave him their Justice of the Peace work to handle.

In March 1861, when just twenty years of age, John Gray was admitted to practice in the U.S.District Court in Kansas. The Civil War broke out the same year and Gray tried to enlist, but was refused admission into the army because of a peculiar pulse in his left arm. He was,

however, accepted for the militia and was made a first lieutenant and aide de camp on the staff of General ~~Pike.~~ Drake The militia was mustered into U.S.Service to assist in repelling the Confederate army under General Price.

Although he was prosperous in Kansas, Judge Gray, suffered from nervous headaches there, and, seeking a change in altitude, he came to Silverton in the Spring of 1883. Forming a partnership with C.M. ~~Foster~~ Frasier, he enjoyed a good practice, and sunk his money in mining speculations.

In 1887 the Judge came to Montrose, where he established an office in a little building donated by James McClure. At this time he possessed $260 in cash and four horses and wagons. The second day after the establishment of the office, he received a fee for defending a horsethief, and after that he did well. He served three years, from 1891 to 1894 as district attorney for the Seventh Judicial District. He was also County Attorney at ~~one~~ the same time and ~~another time.~~ also was town attorney of Montrose, and he also served the same town as Mayor.

One time Judge Gray met on the street a small and raggedly dressed girl. He asked her name and was told that it was Elsie Vandegrift, and, the little girl said: "I always go to Court when I know you are going to talk." The Judge became interested in the young lady and gave her a chance to study in his office. Today the lady is Elsie Lincoln Benedict, World famous Psycho-analyst and Lecturer. The Judge received letters from her regularly now.

Judge Gray was for many years the outstanding attorney and speaker in Western Colorado. He has an extensive vocabulary and his speeches are eloquent.

John Gray is descended from distinguished ancestors. His Grandfather was Dr. Joseph Gray, Surgeon of the Rhode Island Regiment, in the American Revolution. His father was Dr. Henry Gray, prominant Eastern Surgeon. Lucy Bancroft was the wife of Dr. Joseph Gray and the sister of George Bancroft, the famous historian. John Gray's father, Dr. Henry Gray, married Mary Niles in 1840. Mary Niles was the daughter of Sarah Huntington, whose father, Samuel Huntington was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

John Gray was married to Mary Elizabeth O'Driscoll, and the two had seven children, four of whom are still living. They are Annie Ruth, of Telluride, Colorado; Joseph, who is the father of eleven children; John, unmarried; and Mary Olive, who is at home with her father. She is a very accomplished musician and entertainer. Another daughter, Theodosia, died in 1917, during the influenza epidemic.

John Gray

Dated January 6, 1934 --Interview reported by Arthur W. Monroe, Field Survey worker for the Colorado Historical Society.